

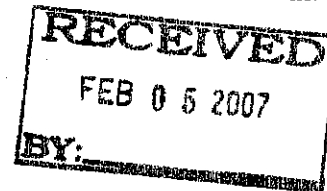


Jim Doyle, Governor  
John A. Scocos, Secretary

STATE OF WISCONSIN, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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February 2, 2007



Senator John W. Lehman  
Room 310 South  
State Capitol

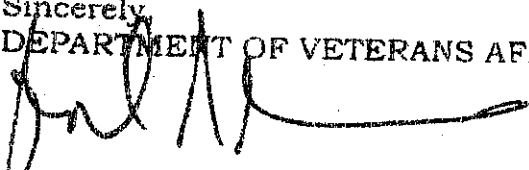
Dear Senator Lehman:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and Wisconsin's half-million veterans, this letter is to express support for the concept of your draft legislation that would provide free or reduced fee access to Wisconsin's state parks for our state's veterans of the Armed Forces.

I agree that there is perhaps no more publicly visible tribute to our state's veterans than to provide such a benefit with its availability posted at the entrance to each park in the Wisconsin state park system. We are also aware that many other states provide a similar benefit.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if this Department can provide additional information or assistance. Thank you for your leadership efforts with regards to this legislation, and for your continued advocacy and support for Wisconsin's veterans and the state agency and programs that commemorate, acknowledge, affirm, and assist them.

Sincerely,  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

  
JOHN A. SCOCOS  
Secretary



## Fiscal Estimate - 2007 Session

☒ Original      ☐ Updated      ☐ Corrected      ☐ Supplemental

<b>LRB Number</b> <b>07-1752/1</b>		<b>Introduction Number</b> <b>AB-0108</b>	
<b>Description</b> Free access to state parks and state trails by certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war			
<b>Fiscal Effect</b>			
<b>State:</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> No State Fiscal Effect			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate			
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations		<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues	
<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations		<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues	
<input type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations		<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs	
<b>Local:</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate			
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs		3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory		<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs		4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue	
<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory		<input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	
<b>5. Types of Local Government Units Affected</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Towns		<input type="checkbox"/> Village	
<input type="checkbox"/> Counties		<input type="checkbox"/> Others	
<input type="checkbox"/> School Districts		<input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts	
<b>Fund Sources Affected</b>		<b>Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS			
<b>Agency/Prepared By</b>		<b>Authorized Signature</b>	
TOUR/ Laura Muenich (608) 261-8764		Laura Muenich (608) 261-8764	
		<b>Date</b>	
		3/1/2007	



## **Fiscal Estimate Narratives**

**TOUR 3/1/2007**

LRB Number	07-1752/1	Introduction Number	AB-0108	Estimate Type	Original
<b>Description</b>					
Free access to state parks and state trails by certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war					

### **Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate**

As currently stated, adding exemptions to allow free access to state parks and state trails by certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war would not have a fiscal effect on the Department of Tourism.

### **Long-Range Fiscal Implications**

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions of the Board of Directors of the company. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and each name is followed by the position to which he or she has been appointed.

2. The second part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions of the Board of Directors of the company. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and each name is followed by the position to which he or she has been appointed.

3. The third part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions of the Board of Directors of the company. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and each name is followed by the position to which he or she has been appointed.



Wisconsin State Senate  
**John Lehman**  
Senator — 21st District

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**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF SENATOR JOHN LEHMAN**

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON  
TOURISM, RECREATION, & STATE PROPERTIES  
Assembly Bill 108  
March 29, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation, and State Properties, on behalf of Senator John Lehman, thank you for scheduling this hearing on Assembly Bill 108.

Senator Lehman and Representative Musser introduced this bill to provide certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war with lifetime, year-round, free state park access. The proposal also allows these veterans free admission to Heritage Hill State Historical Park and all state trails. Wisconsin is one of only a handful of states that does not offer benefits to our disabled veterans with regard to accessing state parks and trails.

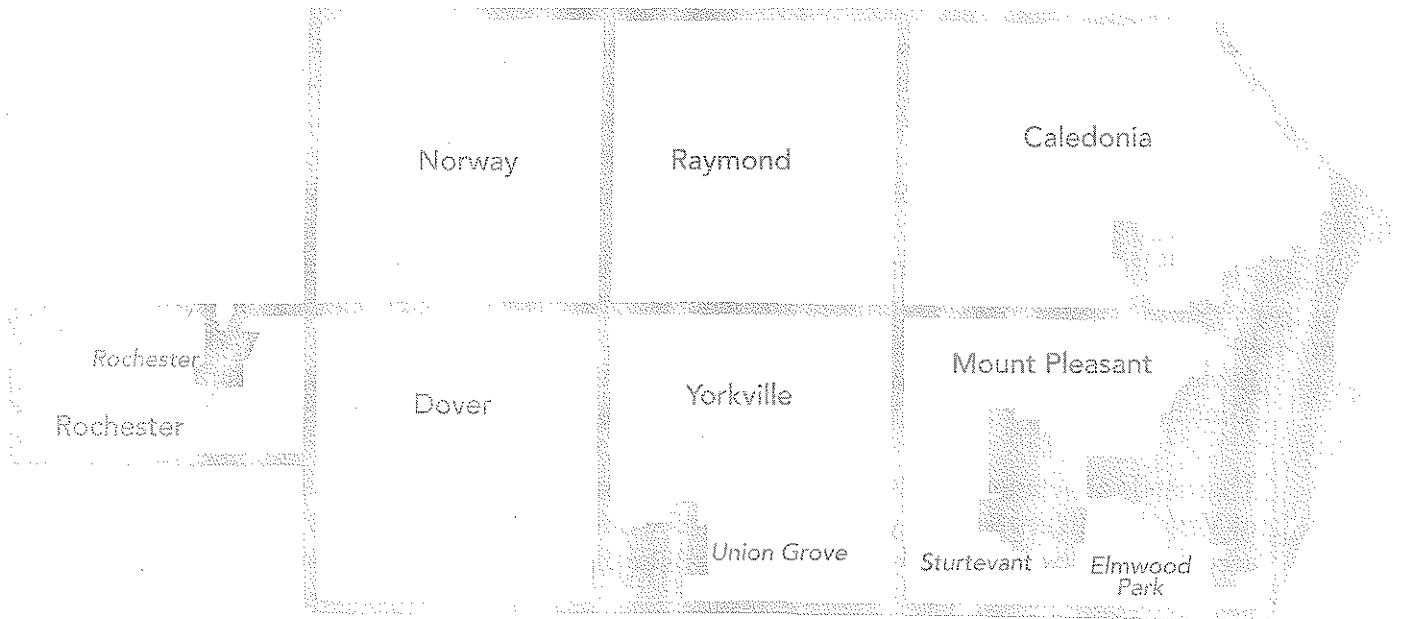
In order to qualify for this new benefit, veterans will present the Department of Natural Resources with documentation from the federal Department of Defense that indicates former POW status or proof that the veteran receives disability benefits for a 70% or greater service-connected disability. The DNR will then issue the veteran a special identification card allowing him or her access to the state park facilities at no cost.

Thousands of veterans will benefit from this proposal's passage. Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary John Scocos has written a letter in support of providing free access to state parks. A copy of this letter will be distributed to each committee member.

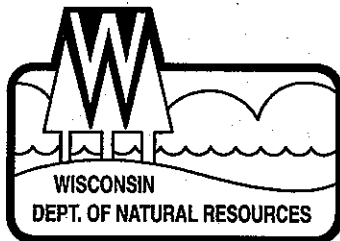
Further, the bill carries a minimal fiscal effect on the DNR, especially in light of the significant personal and economic sacrifices our veterans have made so that we can go about our daily lives without fear. Assembly Bill 108 is another small step toward thanking these brave men and women of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. I would be happy to answer any questions.

## 21<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT







**State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Scott Hassett, Secretary

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**Department of Natural Resources Testimony AB108**

Presented to:

Assembly Tourism, Recreation and State Properties Committee  
10 am, Thursday, March 29, 2007 Room 300-NE.

Presented by:

Laurie Osterndorf, Administrator, Division of Land

AB-108. Free access to state parks and state trails for certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war.

Good Morning Chairperson Kaufert and Committee Members. I am here today to discuss AB108, which would provide free, state park and trail access to certain disabled veterans and former prisoners of war.

I would first like to take a moment on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, to acknowledge the contributions and sacrifices made by our nation's military personnel and thank them publicly for their service.

The Department of Natural Resources understands the desire to provide benefits, in this case free park and trail access, to those who have served our country, especially to those who have suffered in that undertaking. We also recognize the challenges government programs face providing services with decreasing public resources. Given some of our fiscal concerns with the Wisconsin State Park System budget, we are taking a neutral position on AB108.

The Wisconsin State Park System, as you know, is comprised of state parks, state designated trails, state recreation areas and southern forests. A state park vehicle admission sticker or trail pass is currently required

for entrance into most state parks and trails, all recreation areas, and southern forests and at the state's six northern forests.

Based upon 2006 information compiled by the National Association of State Park Directors, Wisconsin ranked 49<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in the percentage of the park system's share of total state expenditures. Only Virginia scored lower than Wisconsin. While our state parks are valued treasures in Wisconsin, our state's financial support of these majestic resources has been eroding.

Historically, 50% of the state park system budget was funded with general purpose revenue and 50% was funded by user fees, known as segregated revenues. In 1995, the statute was amended and the 50/50 funding formula was eliminated. As a result, a significant shift in funding has occurred, placing a greater reliance on fees generated by park system users to keep the system open and operational.

Over 76% of the state park system's operating budget now comes directly from segregated fees, basically the admission and camping fees paid by paid users. The percentage of GPR funding has dropped to less than 24%.

Based upon our estimates of annual visitation, the proposed AB108 will result approximately \$42,000 of lost revenue annually. While \$42,000 worth of financial impact may seem like a small percent of the annual revenue of the park system, that amount is more than the annual operating budget of 30 properties. Properties such as Rock Island State Park, Roche-A-Cri State Park, the Tuscobia State Trail and the Hank Aaron State Trail.

The Wisconsin State Park System historically provided state park fee waivers to school groups, rehabilitative programs serving people with disabilities and seniors holding the discontinued Senior Citizen Recreation Card. Conservation Patron license holders are not required to

purchase park stickers or trail passes because a portion of their patron license is remitted to the park and forest segregated revenue accounts.

We are concerned that if free admission is granted other equally deserving customer groups will also seek legislative fee waivers, placing an even greater financial burden on the families and individuals who visit our parks, forests, and trails.

Comparing state park systems in the Midwest indicates discount and free admission programs are not common. A phone survey of Michigan, Minnesota, and Indiana State Parks found no veteran discount programs, however, Indiana does have a fee waiver for former POW's. Illinois and Iowa State Parks charge no admission fee to any visitors with 100% of the funding for those systems provided by general tax revenues. Other states, such as Missouri, offer free state park admission to everyone using a percentage of the state's sales tax as their funding mechanism.

The other area of concern regarding this bill relates to the ability of our existing state park budget to absorb the costs to identify qualifying residents and to curtail potential fraudulent abuse of the free admission privilege. AB108 as drafted will require the Department to create, inventory and issue a new state card for eligible disabled veterans and former POW's. These new requirements will likely generate significant additional workload for Department staff.

We would ask that you give the Department flexibility in how we extend these privileges. Since admission to Wisconsin State Parks is issued to a vehicle not the individual and admission to state trails is issued to the individual not the conveyance, we would request the flexibility to establish a process that would be the most convenient for our visitors and our staff.

Our ALIS system is currently used to issue discounted disabled veteran annual fishing licenses. Veterans, who qualify for the discount, simply present their veteran's disability award letter issued by the federal

Veteran's Administration at the time of purchase. A revamped ALIS system is in the process of being implemented for the next license year. We feel that using that system may be an effective way to issue free disabled veteran park or trail admissions. We have also considered ways to modify the existing sticker sales process to accommodate those who would present a VA letter or display other former prisoner of war identification.

We ask for consideration to allow the Department to develop the most cost effective method of service delivery. We would strive for the greatest consistency possible between the variety of veteran related privileges.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today.